

From the Great Jakes Blog

2011: The year that law firm websites become “publishing platforms”



By Robert Algeri, Founder
December 29, 2010

In my last post, I predicted that we’re heading towards a major shift in the way that law firms think about their websites. Here’s what it boils down to:

- ▶ **Old thinking:** Law firm websites = *online brochure*
- ▶ **New thinking:** Law firm websites = *publishing platform* for attorney-generated content

Why a publishing platform? Why now?

As I mentioned in my last post, there are several trends in the legal marketplace that are converging to make “content marketing” more effective than ever. And, as a result, attorneys are generating more articles, newsletters, blog posts and other thought leadership content than ever before.

The Challenge

The growth of “content marketing” beckons some interesting questions, such as: *Where do we put all of this content? How can we maximize its business development potential?*

Right now, it’s not uncommon for a firm’s attorney-generated content to be scattered far and wide. As a result, it’s nearly invisible to most prospective clients. For example:

- ▶ Journal articles exist only in print (and end up in the attorney’s desk drawer)
- ▶ Blogs reside on a server that is not connected with the firm’s website
- ▶ Video interviews are on a DVD (also in a desk drawer)



- ▶ Case studies live in past proposals
- ▶ Twitter messages live on Twitter.com
- ▶ Relevant photos are on Flickr
- ▶ Lots of other content is isolated on the firm's local fileserver

Even the content on the firm's website is often scattered throughout sections like "Multimedia," "Experience" and "Publications." Very few prospective clients can be expected to bounce around the website looking for relevant content in all those different sections.

The Solution: A Publishing Platform

What's a publishing platform? It's a website that is designed to showcase a firm's content in a way that maximizes its ability to help generate business. For example, a good publishing platform website has the following characteristics:

- ▶ It acts as a repository for *all of your content*
- ▶ It can easily accommodate oddball content like videos and photo galleries
- ▶ It can import content from your blogs or Twitter accounts via automatic feed
- ▶ It automatically optimizes all of your content for Google
- ▶ It enables users to easily share the content with others
- ▶ And, most important, it allows users to access relevant content from the most logical places — attorney bio pages or practice area sections. (A good publishing platform would never redirect users to other sections of the website to read an article or watch a video.)

Why is this important?

Because creating insightful content isn't enough. The content actually needs to be read by prospective clients in order to help generate business. As a result, the advantage clearly goes to those firms that optimize their websites to make the content as accessible as possible.